Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by cbwx34 - 28 Jan 2013 18:30

Ok, so I'm a bit stubborn. I know Clay and others have talked about adding alcohol to the leather strops... but I've avoided it. I've tried to adopt a KISS attitude, and didn't want to mess with it.

But today, being in the mood to experiment, I did a few knives and sprayed a bit of alcohol on the strops before using. What a difference. One thing I noticed that I hadn't anticipated, was how "crisp" it left the edge after stropping.

I looked and didn't see any, has Clay done any microscope photos of edges done with and without alcohol? Wonder if a difference can be seen? Maybe I (or someone) can track down some he's done both ways and put them up for comparison.

So, I'm sold... for now at least. Thought I'd see what others think of this... especially if you've done it both ways.

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by PhilipPasteur - 28 Jan 2013 18:45

Curtis,

I have not done it both ways, but I may have to try. I am always up for something that works better.

I do have a question though. I usually let either pastes or sprays dry very well, often overnight, just to give my strops the feel that I like. That is, a smooth almost frictionless feel on the steel. I feel that this give me more control and I have always liked my results. So the question is, how much additional friction is produced...or how much more do the stops grab the edge...

Now I know that you can't quantify this easily, but maybe you can describe what you are feeling... kind of.

Phil

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by ApexGS - 28 Jan 2013 19:26

I started using alcohol on the strops after reading Clay's comments on it as well, and it really does seem to make a major difference in how the strops function. I don't have a spare spray bottle but dropping a little on with a soaked q-tip works too.

The feel definitely changes dramatically, to more of a grabby "stiction" as Clay has taken to calling it. It takes some adjusting to work with the strops when they're "sticky" like that, but the results are very nice! I used the dry strops and got used to the smooth feel across the bevel as well, but have started to adjust to using the alcohol on the strops more now. I wonder if doing half of your stropping strokes dry, then finishing up with the alcohol would be an effective tactic?

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by mark76 - 28 Jan 2013 19:56

Interesting... Do you use the strops while they're still wet or do you let the alcohol dry first? And have you tried this with plain water? Does it make a difference?

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by Geocyclist - 28 Jan 2013 20:44

I use alcohol and can tell big difference vs not. I have not tried water. I wet a paper towel with alcohol, pat the stops so I can just barely tell the color of the leather changes, so just damp, not soaking. I use the same towel to wipe the blade. Fold the towel over for the next strop and repeat. I understand the KISS principle, but since I wipe the blade with alcohol anyway, this process doesn't add much work.

I tried a spray bottle and didn't like it. Point blank range was too much alcohol, and backed off got it on whatever was behind the stone. (Not good for the table top).

I have also read that alcohol is used to clean to strops, a lot of it with a brush. It is interesting that the same substance that improves the performance also is used to clean it.

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by DerekWilliams - 28 Jan 2013 21:02

Hello,

After a quick search on this subject i see references to both "denatured" and "rubbing" alcohol". Should rubbing or denatured alcohol be used as they have many similar properties?

Thank you,

Derek

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by cbwx34 - 28 Jan 2013 21:05

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I just give them a quick "mist" spray, so they don't get very wet. I used them as soon as I sprayed them. They do had a bit of "grab", but I didn't think much of it, in fact, I didn't pay attention until Phil asked, so I went back and tried one side wet, one side dry. I also noticed it didn't take long to dry, and feel pretty much like the dry side I tested.

Haven't tried water.

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by cbwx34 - 28 Jan 2013 21:10

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DerekWilliams wrote:

Hello,

After a quick search on this subject i see references to both "denatured" and "rubbing" alcohol". Should rubbing or denatured alcohol be used as they have many similar properties?

Thank you,

Derek

Welcome to the forum!

I was using 70% isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol.

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by PhilipPasteur - 28 Jan 2013 23:41

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Geocyclist wrote:

I use alcohol and can tell big difference vs not. I have not tried water. I wet a paper towel with alcohol, pat the stops so I can just barely tell the color of the leather changes, so just damp, not soaking. I use the same towel to wipe the blade. Fold the towel over for the next strop and repeat.

What kind of a "big difference" have you seen...exactly?

Saying a big difference with no qualifiers leaves me wondering whether you even like the difference... and what it does for you.

How many knives have you done with and without... alcohol??

Just trying to get a handle on what specifically you mean and the frame of reference.

Phil

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by PhilipPasteur - 28 Jan 2013 23:50

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ApexGS wrote:

I started using alcohol on the strops after reading Clay's comments on it as well, and it really does seem to make a major difference in how the strops function. I don't have a spare spray bottle but dropping a little on with a soaked q-tip works too.

The feel definitely changes dramatically, to more of a grabby "stiction" as Clay has taken to calling it. It takes some adjusting to work with the strops when they're "sticky" like that, but the results are very nice!

Same question I asked Geo, Can you be a bit more specific in what you see?

BTW,

here is the definition of "stiction":

Definition of STICTION

the force required to cause one body in contact with another to **begin** to move .

Stiction is the static friction that needs to be overcome to enable relative motion of stationary objects in contact.[1] The term is a portmanteau of the term "static friction",[2] perhaps also influenced by the verb "stick".

Any solid objects pressing against each other **(but not sliding)** will require some threshold of force parallel to the surface of contact in order to overcome static cohesion. Stiction is a threshold, not a continuous force.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stiction

Maybe the coeficient of sliding friction changes due to the moisture...and before the alcohol evaporates?

Still would like to know about the observed differences in specific.

Phil

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